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ETUCE

European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

Refugees & Education: Human Rights for All

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Europe has seen in the recent years a consistent rise of refugees arriving at its shores and land borders, people seeking shelter and protection from wars, persecution and brutal violations of human rights in their home countries. Recently, the influx of men, women and children from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other places in the world, seeking assistance in Europe to save their lives and preserve their freedom has reached a level higher than ever before. The latest [UNICEF education report](#) states that 52,000 teachers and 523 school counsellors in Syria have had to leave their workplace due to the conflict and 2.4 million children are left out of school.



5, Bd du Roi Albert II, 9th
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 91/92
Fax +32 2 224 06 94
secretariat@csee-etu.org
<http://www.csee-etu.org>

European Director

Martin RØMER

Treasurer

Mike JENNINGS

In the midst of conflict, education is often seen as a luxury for refugees. However, **education is a fundamental human right**, one that is vital in restoring hope and dignity to people driven from their homes. Among the refugees are also families and unaccompanied children who disembark in Europe after losing everything. They need to be welcomed into a safe and caring environment. Education helps marginalised children, young people and adults to get back on their feet, lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully in communities and society with a view of building a better future. Thus, educational institutions, school communities, teachers and teacher unions play a major role in helping these people see their human rights and dignity fully respected, independently of their legal status and in accordance with international law.

In order for educational institutions and teachers to appropriately reply to the needs of refugee children, it is essential that educational institutions and facilities are made available in sufficient quantity (buildings, sanitation facilities, safe drinkable water, trained teachers, teaching materials, etc.).

Calling for the respect of human rights of refugees as enshrined in EU fundamental law¹ and international conventions², ETUCE and its member organisations strongly appeal to governments in Europe to do everything in their power to respect, protect and fulfill the right to education with a view to improve education access and learning achievement among refugee children, focusing on the learning environment, teaching quality, early childhood development and accelerated learning programmes.

Affirming their unreserved solidarity with the refugees, in particular the refugee children and young people who are coming to Europe, ETUCE and its member organisations petition the European Union institutions to request Member States to urgently provide access to education to all refugee children, young people and adults, and to include this demand as a long-term European and national policy of the ET2020 Strategic Framework for 2015-2020.

¹ Lisbon Treaty, EU Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU), Dublin III Regulation, etc.;

² UN Refugee Convention, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Education for All Declaration, Convention against Discrimination in Education, the Dakar Framework Education and the Millennium Development goals, etc.

**The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 131 Teacher Unions and 11 million teachers in 48 countries of Europe. ETUCE is a Social Partner in education at the EU level and a European Trade Union Federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of Education International, the global federation of teacher unions.*